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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

20 July 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Moves on Berlin

1. There are signs warning of serious trouble over Berlin. For some time we have pointed out that the Soviets are in a quandary over their Berlin strategy. Khrushchev has not been willing, perhaps even feared, to back off from the sweeping objectives he set, and to seek a mutually acceptable agreement. Nor evidently has he quite dared to abandon negotiations and seek his objectives through unilateral action. The result has been a long period of procrastination, intermittent and inconclusive diplomatic conversations, plus harassments of varying intensity.

2. After Khrushchev withdrew his 1961 ultimatum last October, the Berlin situation receded into the background as the diplomatic dialogue proceeded. When an impasse in the Thompson-Gromyko exchanges was reached, pressure was

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brought to bear on the Berlin air corridors, but this move was not carried to its ultimate conclusion -- Soviet withdrawal from the four-power safety center. Until late May, the Soviets continued to be optimistic that a political settlement would be reached.

3. Since then, however, there has been a perceptible hardening in the tone of Soviet statements and a new sense of urgency. The threat of a separate peace treaty was revived by Khrushchev in mid-May and has once again become firmly imbedded in Soviet pronouncements. To this threat has again been added the warning that the treaty would be signed and implemented with "all its consequences -- the GDR will be fully in control over the ways of communications running through its territory and its air space." Berlin was evidently a principal order of business at the Warsaw Pact meeting in early June, and Khrushchev's private remarks then and subsequently suggest that ways of proceeding with a separate treaty were probably discussed. Since that time, moreover, the Soviets have begun sending strident diplomatic protests over Western actions in Berlin and the East Germans have echoed these with various warnings and threats.

- 2 -

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5. More important as an indication of Soviet policy is the general atmosphere of hostility which Moscow has generated. The Soviets have moved toward a more openly propagandistic and anti-Western approach to disarmament. Moscow has taken pains to present an unusually sharp image of US aggressiveness and to identify this with the President personally. In turn, this has been used as a justification for stringent Soviet internal economic adjustments. Khrushchev has apparently lost much of his usual interest in a summit. He probably foresees a harsh political climate

- 3 -

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when the Soviets resume nuclear testing. All this seems to indicate that the Soviets are not interested in creating an atmosphere which might be conducive to agreements with the US.

6. We cannot conclude that Moscow has definitely decided to solve the Berlin problem through a series of unilateral moves. A plausible explanation for recent developments is that the Soviets have decided to negotiate seriously and are resorting to their usual tactics of building up pressure in preparation for further talks. Even though they have sharpened their general line on Berlin, they have also made a point of reiterating the value of US-Soviet talks, and have even stretched the facts to indicate that a degree of "progress" has been achieved. They have also introduced new variants in their basic positions which could be designed to pave the way to genuine bargaining. On the other hand, the Soviets have increased their public demands for abolition of the Western occupation and ultimate withdrawal of troops as conditions for any settlement. Since they cannot seriously expect such concessions, insistence on these points could be intended to create a record of Western intransigence.

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7. The Soviets have not and probably cannot extricate themselves from their dilemma by a negotiated modus vivendi without obtaining some concessions on the principal issues. They probably now believe that such concessions will not be forthcoming unless further pressures are exerted on the Western Powers. It is likely, therefore, that the Soviets have decided to reactivate the Berlin question and have given new consideration to proceeding unilaterally. We think that the West may be confronted with greatly increased pressures during the next few months. These pressures might take the form of harassments intended to put Western negotiators under duress, or limited unilateral actions, e.g., closure of East Berlin, which would bring the Soviets closer to their objectives.

8. We still cannot estimate with any certainty that renewed pressures would end with a separate peace treaty. The factors which deterred the Soviets in the past have not changed radically enough, in our view, to permit the Soviets to make a new calculation of the risks involved. Even though they have grown in strategic striking power in the last year, this would not lead them to believe that the risks had been significantly reduced. In any case, the Soviets

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would seek to minimize these risks, and Khrushchev has confirmed the generally held view that he would proceed with a separate treaty, thereafter posing a series of minor challenges, each too limited to provoke a dangerous Western reaction.

9. On balance, it appears that Soviet interest in and expectations from negotiations have declined and the chances of unilateral encroachments on Western interests and of a separate peace treaty have increased. But the key variable in the Soviet calculation will be, as always, Moscow's reading of the chances of eventual concessions and, on the other hand, its estimate of the likely Western resistance to particular Soviet actions. Khrushchev will intensively study the forthcoming Rusk-Gromyko exchanges and Dobrynin's talks with the President for evidence on precisely these points.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES: /

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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- 6 -

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